

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 8, 2022**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, June 8, 2022 at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, and as amended by Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022.

Present: Commission Chair Tanya Shallop, Commission Vice Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jaime Garmendia, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commission Lt. David Tucker, Assistant Director of Traffic and Parking Christina Hodge, and Traffic and Parking Staff Russell Findley **Absent:** None

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm by Chair Shallop. Ms. Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commission Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment but there is none.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Director's Update

Ms. Hodge explains that the work on North Washington Square is almost complete, with striping and flex posts installed and only signage remaining. She indicates the three Mall Street speed cushions were installed the prior week and that they look great. The permanent speed humps have been installed in North Salem, and all that remains is final striping. Regarding Columbus Avenue, Ms. Hodge states staff are working with a contractor to install humps in the coming weeks. Staff will also meet with Neighborways tomorrow with revised plans for Proctor and Federal Streets, followed by neighborhood meetings to discuss the updates.

Commissioner Garmendia states he would love to see progress photos for the various projects.

Ms. Hodge explains that work is ongoing at the Museum Place garage, and that additional funds have been approved by the City. Work is expected to be complete mid to late July. Work on the South Harbor garage is also continuing, with the first level bathrooms completed by July. Ms. Hodge states there are no recent crashes she is aware of to report.

Commission Lt. Tucker notes that since the last meeting there were two reported pedestrian/cyclist collisions, one of which was a misunderstanding and no contact was

made (reported by a third party who assumed there was an accident), and the other was a cyclist doing tricks who collided with a motorcycle. He also notes there was a drunk driver incident where a truck hit a home but that there were no major injuries. Commissioner Swartz asks about the location of the two bike incidents, and Lt. Tucker states they were on Crombie and Lafayette Street, respectively.

Chair Shallop asks if Mr. Findley's maps and data get updated regularly with this kind of information regarding crashes. Ms. Hodge explains the data is reflected in the MassDOT portal, and Mr. Findley confirms. It is updated every couple of weeks, with the most recent update from June 6.

Vice Chair Papetti asks about the interval of time between the person on North Street being struck and when he ultimately passed away as a result of his injuries, and Chair Shallop states it was about a month. Mr. Papetti notes that data regarding local fatalities is based on data from the national highway traffic administration (FARS database), and that if a person passes away more than 30 days after being struck by a car it does not get recorded into that database for statistics. He notes that MassDOT may have a different way of accounting for that, but wanted everyone to generally be aware that the way data is collected may not capture everything, even incidents that are prominent and public.

Neighborhood Traffic Calming Request: Felt Street (from Orne St. to Dearborn St.)

Ms. Hodge explains both streets being discussed tonight (Felt and Lee) are close to each other and generally in the same area of North Salem.

Mr. Findley begins the Felt Street presentation and presents initial data. Reported issues include speeding, dangerous conditions for pedestrians, and the area being a common route for commuters and delivery vehicles. Mr. Findley explains there is a school, cemetery, and golf course nearby, and lots of walkers. Mr. Findley indicates 77 neighbors have signed the application, and that there are no marked crosswalks or stop signs from Dearborn all the way up to Orne. Mr. Findley next presents the priority tool and scorings for demographics, land use, speed, and crash data. The speed limit on Felt Street is 25MPH, and the volume ranges from 503 to 695 cars per day. Approximately 45 percent of drivers go over the speed limit, with high speeds around 50MPH. Mr. Findley notes there are differences in speeds and volumes between the northbound and southbound traffic, with northbound traffic being heavier and higher speeds. Compared to other traffic calming project streets, the daily volumes are much lower, but there are similar high speeds.

Ms. Hodge also notes the low volumes but similar speeds to other traffic calming streets, and states staff is curious about the discrepancies between traffic heading north and south. Chair Shallop notes there is another street between Felt and Lee, and that maybe it would be better to look at all three and the area as a whole as these streets are often used as cut throughs. She suggests before taking public comment that the Commission review the presentation for Lee Street to look at the area holistically. Commissioner Garmendia agrees.

Mr. Findley concludes with the staff recommendations for Felt Street, which include adding more signage in both directions reflecting the thickly settled 25MPH limit, collecting additional speed and volume data in the fall, and then determining any further steps pursuant to analysis of the data. Ms. Hodge confirms this is just an initial step, and that the hope is the speed signage helps.

Neighborhood Traffic Calming Request: Lee Street (from Orne St. to Dearborn St.)

Mr. Findley explains the main complaint for Lee Street is excessive speeding at various times of the day. In 2015 the neighborhood worked to lower the speed limit to 25MPH, but conditions have not improved. Mr. Findley indicates this is a common route for commuters and delivery vehicles going from North Salem to Beverly. At one point in time there were attempts to turn the road into a one way at certain times of day, but they were unsuccessful as people ignored the restrictions. Law enforcement has also attempted to help with little results, as there is high visibility and no intersections with stop signs. Mr. Findley presents the priority tool scores, noting lower volumes than Felt Street at around 375 cars per day. High speeds of 44MPH were recorded, with 29 percent of drivers going over the limit. Here northbound volumes were much higher than southbound as well. Mr. Findley states the street is 28 feet wide and mostly a straight shot, which contributes to speeding. Mr. Findley explains staff have similar recommendations for Lee Street, such as updating signage and collecting more data before further intervention.

Chair Shallop asks if there is currently any data regarding Larchmont Street at this point in time, and Mr. Findley states there is not.

Commissioner Swartz acknowledges that time limited one ways may be confusing, and wonders if making the streets permanently one way would help at all. Chair Shallop notes the City tries to avoid creating one-way streets unless it is necessary, and that she cannot imagine it would help, particularly considering the width of the streets. Chair Shallop continues, noting that she would love to take a step back and get an overview of the traffic calming program. She indicates that while she would love to add every street to the program, she suggests we currently have neighborhoods clamoring for inclusion, mostly being well off with access to the Traffic and Parking Commission. Chair Shallop suggests it is important that we look at neighborhoods that do not have the ability to organize and who are essentially ignored when we only consider streets where residents submit applications. She suggests a future discussion regarding how streets get into the program. She reminds the public that there is a limited budget and finite staff time for interventions, and that the traffic calming program is meant to be low-cost interventions.

Vice Chair Papetti agrees with Chair Shallop and also thanks staff for their work. Mr. Papetti suggests that as a City, we should not be in a situation where people feel they need to submit applications in order to have safe streets, and states analogously that we do not wait for citizens to speak up on safety issues before making bridges safe. Vice Chair Papetti suggests that similar to other infrastructure there should be inspection protocols and standard operating procedures, with neighborhoods being examined systematically. Vice Chair Papetti acknowledges there are limited funds, but he challenges staff to make larger

budget requests to City Council, with a commitment to expanding the scope and budget for traffic calming specifically. Mr. Papetti suggests doubling, tripling, or even quadrupling funding requests, noting a goal or target should be set. He states he is not in favor of more signage, suggesting that the best programs in the world have no signage whatsoever. Vice Chair Papetti maintains that if staff has determined this is a safety priority, something should be done about it. He asserts that if the recommendations are putting in signs and waiting a year, then this is not really a safety problem. Mr. Papetti also suggests we do not need endless public meetings about installing speed humps in the City.

Commissioner Garmendia notes the Q&A chat has a comment about stop signs being ignored, and he indicates this seems to be common in neighborhoods like this. Mr. Garmendia suggests people may ignore them because they expect low volumes or perhaps there are visibility issues preventing signage from being seen. Commissioner Garmendia states that there may be some street hygiene to look at to address visibility of signage, but ultimately suggests this is a low volume road and that there may be stronger candidates for physical traffic calming measures. Commissioner Garmendia states we should do what we can to address present issues and examine the extreme imbalances in traffic direction. In the interim, he states he sees no harm in putting up signage and continuing to monitor the area. While the data does not reflect the area as a huge priority, Mr. Garmendia acknowledges that when you live on these streets and are an active pedestrian, it can feel very different. He asks about the state of the sidewalks and what specifically is making people feel unsafe with respect to the flow of traffic.

Chair Shallop notes she walks her dog here every day and lives a few blocks away. She states the sidewalks are raised from the street and are generally in decent condition.

Commissioner Lt. Tucker indicates he used to live in the area, and that people make their way onto these streets to avoid the bad traffic on North Street. Lt. Tucker states he does not wish to offend the neighborhood but suggests that for those that have lived there long, they certainly have seen big increases in volumes as the whole City has, and that generally when there are more cars there is the sense that there is more speeding. He states while there is some speeding shown in the data, he is unsure that a full speed cushion treatment would be an appropriate solution. Commission Lt. Tucker opines that staff is on the right track with the speed limit signs and collecting further data. He suggests that speed limit signs are one of the better signs to have more of.

Vice Chair Papetti asks Ms. Hodge how many extra speed humps the City has in storage right now ready to be deployed if needed. Ms. Hodge states she is unsure, but that several were purchased leading up to the season in anticipation of projects. She notes there have been some changes in plans with certain projects, and that due to shifting dimensions specifically on Federal Street, the plan has shifted from speed cushions to humps, so she is not sure what the final numbers are but will know tomorrow. Vice Chair Papetti states he is not suggesting that they be used here specifically, but suggests he is highlighting the benefit of purchasing equipment in advance to have it ready to deploy. He encourages staff to think about having extra equipment on hand, potentially to install in places that are not the result of resident applications. Mr. Papetti suggests that traffic calming measures are

cheap enough that we could purchase all that the City needs as long as it were put in the budget. Mr. Papetti states he advocates for the maximum approach rather than starting small, putting out the biggest speed bumps and dialing them back if people complain. He acknowledges that the number one barrier is not cost but staff time.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Nina (no last name given) of 41 Felt Street introduces herself and thanks the Commission, noting it is interesting to hear how they think about these issues. The speaker agrees with Commissioner Papetti, stating she is disappointed in the approach from a policy standpoint. Regarding the volume and safety discussion, she states she has lived on higher volume streets and felt safer. She also notes that people do not park on the street because of the high speeds and collisions. The commenter suggests that more signage telling cars to slow down will instead only signal cars to go faster. She suggests a greenway treatment, similar to that in the bike committee recommendations for Felt Street, with more crosswalks, would be helpful. She states what while she agrees that we should not prioritize only wealthier areas, this is a public street used by members who live outside the neighborhood to access the park and cemetery. She says it is important to not just consider who the residents are, but who uses these streets as well.

Julie Raskin of 2 Salt Wall Lane introduces herself and states she sees the traffic from her office daily and hears it in the evening as well. Ms. Raskin states she is concerned that there are no crosswalks at Dearborn and Felt or Claremont and Felt, and that the crosswalk near the playground is not clearly marked. She indicates she sees people rolling through stop signs and other dangerous conditions, noting many near misses. Ms. Raskin states that even residents that have lived here long have stated the issues have existed for a while, which is why there were prior attempts to lower the speed limit.

Ryan Mishony of 2 Lee Street introduces herself and states she does not think more signage is going to be effective. He indicates the street is wide, and that clear visibility makes enforcement tricky and encourages speeding. Mr. Mishony states that residents do not feel safe parking on the street because of the high speeds. He suggests getting creative with traffic calming solutions, and states that if funding is the only issue perhaps neighbors could contribute, as he would prefer one speed bump to 100 signs.

Brenna and Jose Cortez of 2 Felt Street introduce themselves. Jose Cortez explains they live on the corner of Dearborn and Felt, and that they can see the traffic and speeding from their porch. Mr. Cortez notes the excessive northbound traffic, and states that one big problem is when wide streets like Dearborn approach more narrow streets like Felt, which creates dangerous conditions with cars turning quickly. He states he regularly sees near misses and suggests the street can be scary. He also notes there are no crosswalks. Mr. Cortez explains that they moved here last summer from downtown Boston, and so they are familiar with busy streets but that it has been surprising moving to a residential street and experiencing such high speeds and dangerous conditions.

Chris Hawthorn of 3 Lee Street introduces himself and agrees with Mr. Mishony. Mr. Hawthorn explains that he is 60 years old, and that when he was a high school student, he used to use Lee Street as a cut through. He notes that the first day he moved onto Lee he witnessed a car drive by very quickly, and he realized he used to be that jerk speeding down the street. He notes this is not an issue about a wealthy area wanting to be calm and peaceful, but rather that this is a dangerous situation. In addition to speeding, Mr. Hawthorn notes many drivers are distracted on their phones. He states he does not understand why implementing traffic calming measures in the area is such a major ask.

Commissioner Garmendia states he appreciates the comments from attendees, and that he agrees crosswalks would be helpful. He suggests staff investigate putting some paint down to help. Ms. Hodge explains staff did look at a few locations that would be logical, but that they are not ADA compliant in their current conditions, so merely painting the roadway would not work due to legal issues.

Chair Shallop again clarifies that the traffic calming program is primarily low-cost interventions, mostly paint and signage. She states that if curb cuts are not already in existence or ADA compliant, that needs to be addressed before crosswalks can be painted. She acknowledges it is frustrating and states she would love to see more crosswalks but explains there are restrictions in certain areas. Ms. Shallop reiterates that she would love to see calming on all streets, but that unfortunately based on the data and limited funds she regrets that these streets may not rise to the level of traffic calming.

Vice Chair Papetti again states there should be a big picture discussion about the traffic calming program, as when this began five or six years ago, the original thought was that neighborhood applications would be just one component of determining eligibility and the direction of the program. He suggests a systematic safety-first, top-down business analysis of the safety needs of Salem.

Commissioner Garmendia acknowledges there are limitations to the program and the application process, but states that if we think the issue is better solved by other means or a different avenue, then perhaps that referral should be made. He states it seems like there are larger issues in the neighborhood than the traffic calming program can solve, and that that does not mean we should do nothing, but perhaps something more comprehensive if ADA compliance is an impediment to improvements. He laments that cost of ADA compliance can be an impediment to getting work done when it was meant to guide priorities and enforce equality and equity. Instead, things do not get built. Commissioner Garmendia encourages asking for the money needed to do the work that needs to be done.

Chair Shallop asks if Mr. Garmendia is suggesting adding the streets to the traffic calming program. Mr. Garmendia clarifies that what he has heard today is that what is required is outside the bounds of traffic calming, particularly if the solution is crosswalks following ADA compliance. Chair Shallop suggests no disrespect but asks why we would pick this neighborhood over the dozens that need similar intervention but do not have residents advocating actively. Commissioner Garmendia states that expectations must be set in advance, and that if we are changing the way we actively select streets, then we need to do

that first. If the goal is to reprioritize, Mr. Garmendia suggests telling the community how, so people can raise their own petitions accordingly. He maintains that the Commission has a petition before it now, and while we may not have the means to address it fully, we should address it in some way.

Vice Chair Papetti agrees with Commissioner Garmendia and states the department has had mid-year requests for millions of dollars to fix the parking garage, and asks why we cannot do something similar for safe streets. Mr. Papetti suggests that expectations need to be reset, and that as a City we can afford to spend dramatically more on safe streets projects. Vice Chair Papetti states there should be plans for sidewalks and crosswalks, and that as a City we are thinking too small regarding what we are capable of accomplishing.

Chair Shallop asks if it makes sense to address the traffic calming program and prioritization at the next meeting, and everyone agrees.

Lt. Tucker notes staff have the prioritization tools and data but acknowledges there are concerns about equity. He discusses some of the difficulties with enforcement, and notes that they try to catch the outliers and small percentage of speeders.

Vice Chair Papetti notes that we currently talk about speeds with respect to the speed limit, and wonders if we are framing it incorrectly. He suggests the speed limit may be too fast, or even too slow in some instances, and that we should determine what the appropriate speed for areas should be and set targets.

The Commission continues to discuss the streets in question and the traffic calming program and determine both should be tabled for further discussion.

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to table this discussion to the next meeting. Commissioner Garmendia seconds the motion. The vote is four (4) in favor (Swartz, Shallop, Garmendia, and Tucker), one (1) opposed (Papetti). **The motion passes.**

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for June 29th, 2022 at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

May 25, 2022

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Papetti motions to approve the minutes for the May 25, 2022 meeting of the Traffic and Parking Commission as drafted. Commissioner Garmendia

seconds the motion. The vote is four (5) in favor and none (0) opposed. **The motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commissioner Garmendia, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:37 PM.